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eastern wing of the palace, and at the opposite ends of a long corridor. As Gaston went up with the cases and his lantern into the darkness and silence of the upper floors, which the sounds of the festival scarcely reached, strange thoughts came over him. Why were the cases so distinctly addressed, and forwarded from Paris? Was he carrying to Sophia's toilet a passport to the vaults of our Lady of Kazan? Perhaps she meant to marry young Baselovich? Well, she had made him no promise, and he would disappoint the princess. Paulo's bell rang till the whole palace could hear it. He shouted on his lagging vassal, and cursed him in his three languages, for the carrier's bringings were all to be put away; but in her highness's own magnificent dressing-room, inlaid with mirrors, and hung with rose-coloured damask, the cards of address were removed, skilfully transferred so as to leave no trace of tampering, and the exchanged cases deposited on each lady's toilet.

The ball was not over till five in the morning. Her highness and the whole household retired soon after. There were yet some hours till the breaking of the Russian day, but it was long till Gaston slept; his attic above the horses had never seemed so full of moaning wind and creaking rafters; and when he did sleep at last, it was to dream that he was following Sophia's funeral arm-in-arm with Clozoff, who rehearsed to him the whole history of the seven-and-twenty girls as they went. Suddenly, his slumbers were broken by a sound of loud and mingled cries. It was broad day, but the whole palace seemed to be turning upside down; there were hurrying feet and wild lamentations, for her Siberian maid, the oldest and most favoured, who always drew the princess's curtains, had found her highness seated at her toilet, as the maids had left her duly dressed for the night in her satin pinner and lace lappets, but stone-dead, and nothing to account for the fact—only an empty phial, labelled '*l'eau d'or*,' lay on the carpet at her feet.

There was a great gathering of her highness's family, and a strict investigation commenced, but not proceeded with; for the same day a stranger presented himself at the gate of the Hermitage, craving an audience of her majesty's private secretary, by whom he was conducted through one of the secret corridors to the imperial closet. He was seen to leave the palace within an hour; immediately after the Grodizoff family received certain intimations, according to which it was publicly announced that the princess had died from a stroke of apoplexy; that Sophia Petrova was heiress of her Finland estates; that the rest of the property should pass to the male heirs; but whoever the young lady married, must take the name and arms of Grodizoff. After her highness had been laid with becoming pomp beside her twenty-seven protégées, the fashionables of St Petersburg mourned over the shutting-up of her palace for some time; but it was opened again, though with reduced splendour; for Sophia, the heiress, married a French nobleman, who appeared at court as the Marquis de Thienville, sent on a secret embassy from Versailles. The princess's papers and all the water of gold which could be found were carried off at an early stage of the business by a messenger from the Hermitage. Among the former were the title-deeds of the newly purchased estate on the Vistula, which once more reverted to the crown; and also a prediction, written in the old Slavonic language of Russia, by one who called himself Vlademer of Kioff, setting forth that her highness would never die except by a girl of her family, who should inherit her wealth. All inquiries failed to discover either the prophet or the chemist with whom her highness had dealt; nor did time or chance throw any further light on the doings of that singular and most unscrupulous lady, who is still remembered in the traditional gossip of St Petersburg by the equivocal title of 'The Killing Princess.'

THE NEW GOLD-DIGGINGS.

FIRST ARTICLE.

STRANGELY enough, it was reserved for the middle of the nineteenth century, the period fruitful in wonders of art, to be the great era of gold-discovery—the diggings of California, Australia, and British Columbia having all come into notice within the space of a very few years. So strange, indeed, is the fact, that one is puzzled to say what people were about that they never made these notable discoveries before. The circumstance, we think, shews that, after all, our knowledge of the earth's surface is still exceedingly imperfect. For anything we can tell, there may yet be many other places abounding in unheard-of mineral wealth, which is destined to alter the tenor of commercial transactions, and to work extraordinary changes in matters of social concern.

As regards the last of the gold discoveries, England can claim little credit for penetration or promptitude. The discovery was at first treated with due official reserve. Douglas, governor of Vancouver's Island, writes on the 16th of April 1856 to Labouchere, as head of the Colonial department, that gold was found within 'British territory on the Upper Columbia, and that he is, moreover, of opinion that valuable gold-deposits will be found in many other parts of that country.' The dry reply which ensues is followed by a correspondence which gradually increases in interest; but only by means of parliamentary reports and public rumours does the great discovery become finally known in the summer of 1858, when suddenly the whole world is in a blaze on the subject, and from all parts—California, in particular—there is a rush to the almost unknown territory, which has hitherto been held as little else than hunting-ground for savages, and certain fur-trading companies.

In looking at any recently constructed map of this part of the western hemisphere, we see, yet fail adequately to realise in imagination, the vastness of the stretch of territory belonging to the British crown, amounting as it does to one-half of the continent of North America. The more western and northerly portion of this extensive country, receiving its name from an inland sea in its centre—Hudson's Bay, into which might be dropped, without incommoding it, the island of Great Britain—has, as is well known, been held chiefly by the Hudson's Bay Company, an English joint-stock concern of long standing, that has its head-quarters in London, and with which, about forty years ago, a rival undertaking, called the North-west Company, was successfully incorporated. Clerks, factors, voyageurs, and other functionaries established at trading-posts, or roaming over thousands of miles of this great wilderness, and acquainted with the principal rivers communicating with the Pacific, might be supposed in their searches to have long ere now seen the glitter of golden nuggets; yet, as if fate had settled it otherwise, such was not the case; or at all events, if they knew that there was gold, the fact was not generally communicated, and it became known only by casual circumstances. Governor Douglas's first communication

to the Colonial Office, in August 1856, appears to have been the result of a report obtained from Mr Angus M'Donald, a clerk in charge of Fort Colville, one of the Company's trading-posts in the Upper Columbia District. Already, according to M'Donald, persons had begun to dig and look for gold-dust, and were earning daily as much as from L.2 to L.8 each man. Finding its way, in the course of trade, to Victoria, the capital of Vancouver's Island, the gold excited some commotion; and persons began to migrate, for the purpose of mining, from adjacent parts of the United States, although the Indians, who had an interest in the soil, were not very favourably disposed towards the intruders. The spots alleged to be most prolific of gold lay from one to two hundred miles inland from the narrow channel called the Gulf of Georgia, which separates Vancouver's Island from the mainland. Into this channel, at Fort Langley, about the 49th degree of north latitude, falls the Fraser River, an important navigable river, which receives a number of feeders; the chief of these being the Thompson River, which joins it on its left bank about the 50th degree. On these rivers, gold was said to exist at various places in sufficient abundance to arouse the keenest spirit of adventure, and we can therefore fancy the excitement which prevailed soon after the reality of the discoveries was put beyond doubt. According to the Francisco correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, the first skilled miner who worked on Fraser River was a Scotchman named Adams. He happened to be travelling in this part of the Hudson's Bay territory early last year, on his way to see some relatives, and he stopped at one of the trading-posts, where he met an old acquaintance named Maclean, who told him that the Indians living on Fraser River had been bringing gold-dust to the post to trade with, saying they had dug it on the river-bank. This statement was listened to by Adams with greedy ears, and his resolution was soon taken to examine into the matter for himself. He had been a miner in California, and knew how to go to work. He accordingly provided himself with a pick, shovel, and large tin-pan, and went to the dwelling of a family of Indians who had been in the habit of bringing gold and gold-dust to the post. He found the squaws engaged in washing for gold with baskets, and from appearances, was satisfied that he was in rich diggings. He returned to the post, made a rocker, purchased some provisions, went back to the diggings, hired a couple of Indians to help him, and worked industriously for three months, in which time he realised upwards of a thousand dollars. Becoming tired of living away from white society, he went down to Puget Sound—an inlet diverging into Washington territory from the Gulf of Georgia—and there told his story to some American sailors, who returned with him to the diggings on Fraser River, and by them the search for gold was prosecuted with considerable success. In this way, reports concerning the diggings spread abroad; the inhabitants of Victoria, and finally of San Francisco, caught up the marvellous intelligence, and in the early part of the present year, a run to the new diggings had commenced.

The arrival at Victoria of steamers from San Francisco, bringing a host of American adventurers on their way to the new Dorado, appears to have somewhat alarmed Governor Douglas. Under date April 27, 1858, he wrote on the subject to the governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, by whom the communication was handed to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, the new head of the Colonial Office. 'I have,' said he, 'to communicate for the information of the governor and committee that the steam-vessel *Commodore* arrived in this port on the 25th instant, direct from San Francisco, with 450 passengers, chiefly gold-miners, who have come here with the intention of working the gold-mines of the interior. About 400 of those men were landed on the same day, and, with the exception of a few who left yesterday for Fraser River, are now engaged in purchasing canoes, and making arrangements for continuing their journey by Fraser River into the Couteau country. They all appear to be well provided with mining-tools, and there seems to be no want of capital and intelligence among them. About sixty of the number are British subjects, with about an equal number of Americans, and the rest are Germans, Frenchmen, and Italians. Though our little town was crowded to excess with this sudden influx of people, and there was a temporary scarcity of food and dearth of house-accommodation, the police force small, and many temptations to excess in the way of drink, yet they were remarkably quiet and orderly, and there has not been a single committal for rioting or drunkenness since their arrival here. The merchants and general dealers of Victoria are rejoicing in the increase of wealth and business produced by the arrival of so large a body of people in the colony, and are strongly in favour of making this place a stopping-point between San Francisco and the gold-mines, which, so far as respects the prosperity of the colony, is evidently an object of the utmost importance, as, both in going and returning, the miners would make purchases, and spend a great deal of money; the value of property would be vastly enhanced, while the sale of public land and the colonisation of the country would be greatly promoted. The interests of the empire, if I may use the term, may not, however, be improved to the same extent by the accession of a foreign population, whose sympathies are decidedly anti-British. From that point of view the question assumes an alarming aspect, and leads us to doubt the policy of permitting foreigners to enter the British territory, *ad libitum*, without taking the oath of allegiance, and otherwise giving security to the government of the country. In the meantime, the people who have gone into the interior will meet with innumerable difficulties of route in their progress towards the mines, both from the nature of the country and the dangerous state of the rivers. The principal diggings on Fraser and Thompson Rivers are also at present, and will continue, flooded for many months to come; there is, moreover, a great scarcity of food in the gold-districts; so that those united causes will, in all probability, compel many of the ill-provided adventurers to beat a retreat, and for the time to relinquish the enterprise. The licence-system has not been yet carried into effect, and it will be difficult to bring it into a general operation. It has since occurred to me that by levying an import-duty on goods, the gold-districts might be taxed to any desirable extent, without clamour or exciting discontent among the people; an object which might be effected at a moderate expense, by means of a customs-station on Fraser River, and another at the point where the road from the Columbia strikes the ford of the O'Kanagan River, those being the only two commercial avenues of the Couteau country. I shall soon address her Majesty's government on the subjects referred to in this communication, and it is also my intention to represent how seriously the peace of the country may be endangered by the presence of so many people wandering over the interior in a vagrant state, especially in the event of the diggings proving unremunerative, and the miners being, as an inevitable consequence, reduced to poverty, and destitute of the common necessaries of life. We have this moment

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been informed of the arrival of the Pacific mail-steamer *Columbia*, at Port Townsend, with eighty passengers from San Francisco, who are also bound for the Couteau gold-district; and we observe by the latest San Francisco papers that several other vessels are advertised for the same destination.'

About the same time, in a letter to the secretary of the Hudson's Bay Company, Governor Douglas says: 'The tidings from the gold-district are of the most flattering description, but are not supported by a large return of gold-dust. Mr Simpson reports that gold is found in more or less abundance on every part of Fraser River, from Fort Yale to the Forks; but I presume those diggings cannot be very productive, or there would have been a larger return of gold. Chief-trader Yale reports that parties are proceeding up Fraser River towards the gold-diggings almost every day.' Subsequent communications in the Blue-book whence we make these extracts shew that the flocking of Americans to the new diggings continued to excite serious apprehensions; but in these fears the home authorities did not participate; nor would the people of the United Kingdom sanction any plan to exclude foreigners from settling among, and working the mines within a British territory. Accordingly, on the 1st of July, the colonial secretary, now roused to the importance of the discoveries, wrote to Mr Douglas, stating that her Majesty's government, while determined on preserving the rights both of government and commerce which belong to this country, and while having it in contemplation to furnish such a force as will preserve law and order, declare it to be 'no part of their policy to exclude Americans and other foreigners from the gold-fields. On the contrary, the governor is distinctly instructed to oppose no obstacle whatever to their resort thither for the purpose of digging in those fields, so long as they submit themselves, in common with the subjects of her Majesty, to the recognition of her authority, and conform to such rules of police as it may be thought proper to establish.' Douglas is further instructed to exercise caution and delicacy in dealing with those manifold cases of international relationship and feeling which are certain to arise. By these concessions, the liberal policy of the Americans in freely admitting British subjects to a participation in the mineral wealth of California is gracefully reciprocated, and, along with other explanations on the subject, have been received in a becoming manner by the citizens of the United States.

It being necessary, in the strange position of affairs which had evolved, to adopt measures for governing the country of the new diggings as a free crown-colony, the subject, as newspaper readers know, was lately brought before parliament; the result being that a distinct colony was formed with a constitution to last for five years. And here we may be allowed to express surprise at the paucity of invention which from first to last has been demonstrated in giving a name to this portion of British America. At first, when the matter came before parliament, the appellation of New Caledonia was fixed upon—a name not only bad in itself, as every name embracing the word *new* is acknowledged to be, but bad as being a repetition of the title given to an island in the Pacific which was lately settled by the French. Dropping New Caledonia, the Colonial Office at length fixed on British Columbia, which is about as clumsy as its predecessor, and will no doubt have afterwards to be abandoned for something shorter and more pointed. British Columbia, as it seems we must call it, is legally defined to comprise 'all such territories within the dominion of her Majesty as are bounded to the south by the frontier of the United States of America, to the east by the watershed between the streams which flow into the Pacific Ocean and those which flow into the Atlantic and Icy Oceans, to the north by the 59th parallel of north latitude, and to the west by the Pacific Ocean; and shall include Queen Charlotte's Island and all other islands adjacent, excepting Vancouver's Island'—this last being a settlement of the Hudson's Bay Company, according to a special grant which expires a year or two hence. The frontier of the United States being on the 49th parallel of north latitude, the new colony of British Columbia lies within ten degrees from north to south, and so far may be described as a block of 200,000 square miles stretching westward from the Rocky Mountains to the shores of the Pacific.*

In making regular settlements in Vancouver's Island, the Hudson's Bay Company engaged to dispose of crown-lands to immigrants; and thus Victoria has latterly increased in size and population. Extending gradually as a resort for traders, it experienced an extraordinary accession of inhabitants, and land in its environs came rapidly into demand as soon as the tide of gold-seekers fairly set in. The accounts of its sales of town-lots remind us of similar affairs in San Francisco and Melbourne. The land-office is beset from early morning, and such was the amount of business done that there were not means for making out titles fast enough.

The following letter from Victoria, dated June 20, appears in the *San Francisco Bulletin*: 'There are two beautiful harbours here; the lesser one is where the city of Victoria has been commenced, and three miles to the north-west of Esquimalt Bay, where the largest ships in the world may safely enter and lie. This harbour, however, will admit ships drawing sixteen feet of water at low tide; and such boats as the *Pacific*, *Commodore*, or *Columbia*, may come readily to the town. Victoria has been the fort and principal trading-post of the Hudson's Bay Company for a number of years, and a careful examination of the geography of the country at once shews their wisdom and foresight. The site of the town is beautiful, rising gently from the banks of the harbour, extending back and spreading out into a plateau, forming a beautiful site for a city. Already buildings have been commenced to accommodate the rush of people. Stores go up as fast as the material can be furnished.

'The people here had not anticipated so sudden an influx of population, and consequently no preparation in the way of lumber for buildings, or provisions for the people had been prepared, so these things are now scarce and very high. The supply of provisions was so small—people were coming from many points around the Sound, daily increasing the numbers—that several small vessels were despatched to Bellingham Bay, and forthwith cargoes of their surplus supplies were brought in; and with them, within the two weeks past, some eighteen traders and merchants have changed their places from that point, bought lots, and commenced the sale of their goods here. Arrangements are already perfected to send the steamers *Surprise* and *Sea-bird* up Fraser River to Fort Hope. Three trips have already been made. The time occupied is three days, up and back. The river—which interested scribblers for paper-towns have represented as a wild mountain-torrent—is beautiful, and its navigation not only practicable, but perfectly

* The governor appointed to this new and hopeful colony is, we believe, Colonel R. C. Moody, R.E., at present commanding the Royal Engineers in Scotland, in which capacity he has conducted the structural alterations on Edinburgh Castle. Both as regards accomplishments and general experience, no one could better fill this important post. Colonel Moody was formerly lieutenant-governor of the Falkland Islands, which he with a party of his corps prepared for colonisation, between 1841 and 1848. According to the newspapers, the gallant colonel will shortly proceed to assume the duties of the new government, embarking at Southampton, and proceeding to the colony *viâ* Chagres and Panama.

easy and safe. As to the extent and richness of the mines of Fraser River, abundant evidence is on every side here to prove the truth of the extravagant stories before related. I have talked freely with a number of my friends who have worked on the river-banks, and have exhibited to me hundreds of ounces of the dust collected there before the waters commenced to rise.'

Another writer in the same paper says of Victoria: 'This place improves on me on acquaintance. There is plenty of fish in the bay; both large and small are caught from the bridge. There is a great variety of pleasant walks in the neighbourhood. We went about six miles to the sound shore. It is a curious beach, and consists of millions of tons of pebbles, from the size of an egg down to peas and beans. They are used a great deal in town for the streets, and in gardens for walks, and wherever there is much travel. 'In two minutes' walk from the fort, you are in the fields, and the grounds are covered with ripe strawberries and blackberries. The wild rose-bushes are in full bloom. There is an abundance of young oaks, aspen, and other shrubs, on up to the big old oak and lofty pine. The ground is not a dead-level, but just even enough to make it pretty, and the brush and trees are so thick that it is pleasant walking among them. The temperature is just right for walking; and the prevailing wind from Mount Olympus and the Coast Range makes the otherwise too great warmth delightfully bracing.'

A third correspondent describes the place as 'growing like wild-fire;' and in the account given by a fourth, we have a graphic detail of the process of buying town-lots. 'The great event since I wrote you last, in this place, was the sale of town-lots, under the direction of the Hudson's Bay Company, on the 21st. The sale created a great deal of interest, and, long before the hour of opening the Land-office, its doors were besieged by an anxious crowd of people, eager to invest their money in lots they knew not where situated, or when they would receive deeds to them. The Company owned some 6400 acres of land, upon which the town of Victoria is located, and had sold, from time to time, the most eligibly located lots, of 60 feet front by 120 deep, at first for 25 dollars, then 50 dollars, then 75 dollars each, until all the land lying within seven or eight blocks of the water had been disposed of. The rapid and wonderful rise in the value of this property was so great, and the demand such, that the Company determined to throw some 1200 additional lots in the market, and raise the price to 100 dollars per lot. The land was hurriedly surveyed, and written notices posted on the door of the office, stating that the lots would be sold at the above rates, the purchaser to receive a receipt for the amount of money paid, and when the map should be completed, to be entitled to a choice of the same according to the number of his receipt—the receipts to be numbered as issued. This receipt is very brief, and merely expresses that a certain sum has been received on account of town-lots. It will be some ten days before purchasers get their title-deeds, which are very brief and simple in form, discarding *in toto* all the usual local phrases and terms. It is estimated that about 25,000 dollars were paid into the Land-office during the day. No person was allowed to purchase exceeding six lots. Notwithstanding this large amount of real estate thus suddenly flung upon the market, prices remain firm, with a strong upward tendency. Building-lots five and six blocks back from the water-front are selling at from 1000 to 2000 dollars each, according to location.'

A demand for land, not very dissimilar, prevailed in connection with some other places in Vancouver's Island; the universal expectation, of course, being that much of the gold to be discovered would find its way thither, and not a little of it be spent with a recklessness according to the ordinary improvident habits of gold-diggers.

WHEN I WAS A SCHOOL-BOY.

Well do I remember those delicious half-holidays at school, when we started off in groups to spend the afternoon among the hills, or by the river-side. With arms twined round one another's necks, in school-boy fashion—my group consisting of three sworn chums besides myself, and our exact destination kept as an important secret from the other groups—would we start off, and plod onwards towards a certain moor-burn far up among the green hills. On our way thither, if a small bird chanced to be *churling* its happy song in the hedgerows, how instantly were our deliberations stopped, and our curiosity raised to discover the nest: the nest found, how eager to hear the report—eggs or young. We were all naturalists in our own special ways: one had a *penchant* for beetles; another for moths; a third was ever on the *qui vive* for birds' eggs; while a fourth, perhaps, kept a heterogeneous collection of caterpillars, to see what they would turn to. Caterpillar-collecting, I may as well observe, was considered capital fun; so was pupa or chrysalis hunting; and I remember, when one of the latter was found, it used to be conveyed to a certain defined portion of ground, the property of its captor, and there buried, and zealously guarded till the time came for its wondrous transformation into the perfect insect. The boy whose chrysalises changed into the greatest variety of insects, was considered exceedingly fortunate, and held a greater rank in our estimation than before.

As 'we four' wandered along towards our destination—the hill-burn—the objects that crossed our path were always carefully noted and commented upon. Birds were the chief objects of our solicitude, and many a weary search we made for their nests. Sometimes the skylark would rise mounting before us, with her glorious flood of song; but she, and her song too, passed comparatively unheeded by us, being of secondary importance to the tuft of grass from whence the bird rose, with the possibility of a nest therein. Poor larks! many an egg was stolen from them to grace our collections, and yet the skyward messengers seemed to be as plentiful as ever in the following spring.

At the foot of the hills was a small sheet of water termed the Pot Loch, the margin and depths of which supplied us with many interesting subjects for our collections. We always visited it on our way to the moor-burn, to set lines for pike against our return and to institute a diligent search amongst the adjacent weeds and grass for anything we could find. During those investigations, we always separated, each having his own beat. An exclamation of mingled delight and surprise would cause us to rush to the spot, to be rewarded perhaps with nothing more than a quantity of frog-spawn, or a colony of tadpoles, or, as we called them, *paddle ladles*. Then an eager cry from the foot of the loch, with shouts of 'Quick! quick!' would bring us panting to the side of the discoverer, our steps thither accelerated from the fear of being too late, and our fears too often realised; for just as the spot was gained, we would receive the annoying assurance that if we had arrived a moment sooner, we would have seen *such* a monster of an eel—said monster having just wriggled out of sight into the water-weeds. These little accidents only increased our zeal, and were more than made up for by the many curiosities discovered and appropriated. Water-lilies were severed from their sub-aquatic stems; their broad leaves supplied with masts of reeds, and with paper attached, set adrift on the loch.